DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 219 936 FL 013 055


AUTHOR Simich, Carmen; Rivera, Charlene

TITLE Sociolinguistic/Ethnographic Issues and the Assessment of Bilingual Students' Language Proficiency.

INSTITUTION InterAmerica Research Associates, Rosslyn, Va.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE Mar 81
CONTRACT 400-79-9942
NOTE 31p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Bilingual Education; Culture Fair Tests; Elementary Education; *English (Second Language); *Ethnography; Inservice Teacher Education; *Institutes (Training Programs); *Language Proficiency; *Sociolinguistics; Spanish Speaking; Student Evaluation; Test Construction; *Testing
IDENTIFIERS Arizona (Tucson)



ABSTRACT

A teacher training program was implemented over a 2-year period in cooperation with the Tucson Unified School District, where over 28% of the students have been identified as having a primary language other than English. The goal of the training was to provide a forum wherein teachers and administrators would explore the application of ethnographic/sociolinguistic theories and methodologies as these can be applied to language proficiency assessment practices. The training was implemented in three phases. Phase I was a graduate level course for participating teachers which focused on models of language proficiency, and language proficiency in the bilingual classroom and community. Phase II consisted of the development of field techniques and a teacher observation instrument (TOS). Central to this instrument is a consideration of the social contexts used to describe students' language behavior. Phase III consisted of several stages: identification of issues for field testing of the TOS, more formal training for teachers in microethnographic/sociolinguistic field methods, and development of criteria for analyzing TOS field test results. Finally, the limitations and significance of the teacher training program are described in order to provide evaluative information regarding the ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach to language proficiency assessment. (AMH)



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# Sociolinguistic/ Ethnographic Issues and the Assessment of Bilingual Students' Language Proficiency

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Carmen Simich
ALPBP Research Associate

Charlene Rivera
ALPBP Project Director

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March, 1981

FL013055

This paper was prepared as part of the Assessment of Language Proficiency of Bilingual Persons (ALPBP) project. The project is funded by the National Institute of Education (N.I.E. 400-79-0042) and administered by InterAmerica Research Associates, Rosslyn, Virginia. The teacher training component, reported here, was implemented in cooperation with District 1, Tucson, Arizona. The opinions of the contributors are their own and do not reflect those of the National Institute of Education.

## Introduction

The research reported in this paper was implemented under the Assessment of Language Proficiency of Bilingual Persons (ALPBP) project. The two-year project is funded by the National Institute of Education (NIE) and administered by InterAmerica Research Associates.

The purpose of this paper is to describe the teacher training program implemented over a two year period in cooperation with Tucson Unified School District (TUSD). TUSD was selected as the training site for the ALPBP project because of the district's interest in the development of innovative approaches to the education of language minority students. TUSD serves a community in excess of 500,000. Approximately 57,000 students are enrolled in TUSD schools. Approximately 16,000, or 28.4%, are Hispanic, of which approximately 11,000 have been identified as having a primary language other than English. In addition, the school district also services about 1,000 students from 79 various language backgrounds.

TUSD administrators felt that the ALPBP teacher training program in ethnographic/sociolinguistic methodologies would complement their efforts in developing a nontraditional language proficiency assessment instrument, the Language Proficiency Measure (LPM) (TUSD, 1981). The educators who became involved in the training program were teachers and administrators from the school district. District administrators had an opportunity to input in the content of the program during the planning stage through a variety of phone conversations and on-site meetings. Teachers had an opportunity to contribute to the training plan through a needs assessment survey and formal and informal meetings.

The general goal of the training component of the ALPBP project was to provide a forum wherein teachers and administrators would explore the application of ethnographic/sociolinguistic theories and methodologies applied to language proficiency assessment practices. In order to accomplish this goal, bilingual and monolingual educators were provided with a background in linguistics, sociolinguistics, ethnography of speaking, measurement, and research methodology. The expected outcome of the training was that it would enable Tucson educators to develop more effective language proficiency assessment strategies applicable to their particular student population.

The process of establishing a relationship with TUSD administrators and teachers took place over approximately a six month period in the fall and winter of 1979. The actual training was implemented in three phases. Phase I consisted of a graduate level course, offered during the spring semester of 1980. Phase II was implemented in the form of a three week intensive workshop in the summer of 1980. During this workshop, the Teacher Observation Instrument (TOS) was developed. Phase III, the last of the ALPBP training component implemented in Tucson, consisted of several stages. The first constituted a preparation stage wherein the ALPBP project staff identified salient issues to be considered for the field testing of the TOS. Following the preparation stage, a workshop was implemented in the spring of 1981 to give teachers more formal training in microethnographic/sociolinguistic field methods. This was undertaken with the specific purpose of enabling TUSD teachers to field test the TOS. The next stage consisted of the development of criteria for analyzing the TOS field test results. The finalization of this process took place in a two-day meeting in the summer of 1981 with a TUSD representative, the ALPBP Project Director, and ALPBP Research Associate.

A detailed description of Phase I is found in Philips' article in this monograph. The actual training process and outcomes from Phases II and III are fully described in the body of the paper. The conclusion focuses on evaluative information identifying limitations and significance of the ALPBP teacher training program in Tucson.

## Theoretical and Methodological Approach

Traditionally, schools have used a developmental model of acquisition of communicative skills based on white middle-class children's socialization experiences. This model assumes children come to school having the same basic experiences at home and in the community. It also assumes that cognitive and linguistic skill development follows a rather fixed growth curve which takes as the norm white middle-class children's developmental characteristics. These assumptions are reflected in standard monolingual curriculum objectives as well as in the segmentation of knowledge by grade level. The model fails to recognize culturally different language socialization experiences of children from multilingual/multicultural backgrounds. It lacks the necessary flexibility to build upon variability in the acquisition of communicative skills by children of different cultural backgrounds, and to relate these skills to the learning of new concepts at school. This lack of understanding and acceptance of culturally different language socialization patterns of communication may be a major factor contributing to the poor performance in school by language minority students (Philips, Note 1).

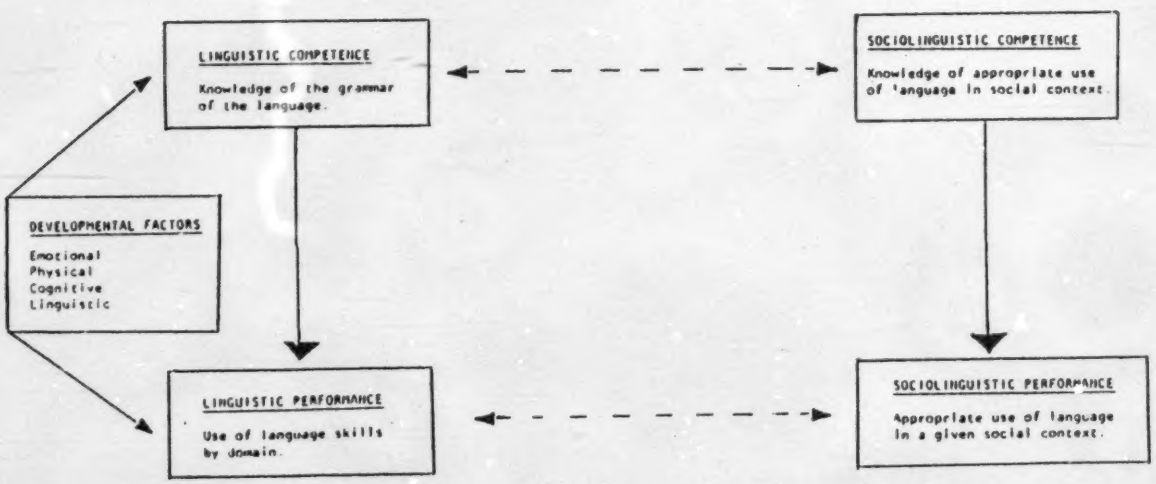
Recognizing the inadequacies of this traditional model, an ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach to communicative proficiency and its assessment was

adopted for use in the ALPBP teacher training program. The approach entails both theoretical and methodological considerations about the nature of children's language acquisition, language use, and its measurement.

From a theoretical perspective, the concept of language proficiency is seen as embracing "the child's full range of social uses of language and non-verbal signals rather than encompassing uses associated with the transmission of literacy skills of reading and writing" (Philips, in press, p. 3).

In order to operationalize this interpretation of the language construct, Briere's (1979) integrative model of communicative proficiency was modified for use in the training process to include those factors which influence children's language development and language use. The model, illustrated in Figure 1, consists of four basic components: linguistic competence and linguistic performance -- based on Chomsky's (1965) understanding of language -- and sociolinguistic competence and sociolinguistic performance -- based on Hymes (1972) interpretation of communicative competence.

Figure 1. A SOCIOLINGUISTIC/LINGUISTIC MODEL OF COMMUNICATIVE PROFICIENCY
(Adapted from Briere, 1979)



Linguistic competence refers to the intuitive knowledge a native speaker has about the rules of the grammar of his/her language(s) (i.e., phonology, syntax, and the lexicon). This refers, for example, to the tacit knowledge a native English-speaking student has about when and how to use both regular and irregular plurals, to make verb and noun agreements, or to understand the sounds of the dialectal variations spoken in various communities.

Linguistic performance refers to the actual use the speaker makes of his/her linguistic competence using the "proper" grammar and vocabulary. These skills are evidenced in the ability to comprehend and speak as well as to read and write if literacy skills have been introduced.

Sociolinguistic competence refers to the knowledge a native speaker has about the appropriate use of his/her language within different social environments, i.e., the tacit knowledge of what to say to whom, for what reason(s) and under what circumstance(s). In the school setting, it refers to the knowledge a student has of the appropriate rules of interaction and interpretation when interacting with teachers, peers and other participants.

Sociolinguistic performance refers to the actual communicative behaviors of a speaker which lead other members of a speech community to believe that he/she is communicating appropriately. For example, in U.S. schools teachers often expect students to look them in the eye while being reprimanded or when responding. In some cultures this is considered inappropriate; thus, if a student does not provide a response appropriate to the culture, a teacher unfamiliar with the child's cultural background might conclude that the student is disrespectful or uncooperative.

The ethnographic perspective requires the application of methodologies which support observation of naturally occurring interactions, participant observations and interviews as research tools for determining the nature of children's communicative proficiency. This is in contrast to experimental methodologies which focus on language interactions in contrived rather than natural settings. By their very nature, experimental methodologies disregard children's natural language abilities because they focus on knowledge of language skills which may lie outside their socialization experiences.

In an effort to develop observational criteria to be used in analyzing observations of children's naturally occurring communicative interactions and relate these to communicative proficiency, ALPBP project staff reviewed current theoretical and applied research on the nature of language and its functional uses. Following is a brief summary from that review.

Hymes (1964) argues that knowledge of a language implies more than an innate and subconscious knowledge of the rules of the language (Chomsky, 1965). He suggests that language use within a speech community consists of culturally influenced communication modes, which include systematic patterning of speech governed by social rules. He proposes that an ethnography of speaking is required to describe the patterns of language use in terms of their distribution and function. He categorizes language in terms of basic functions: expressive, directive, and referential.

Halliday (1973) categorizes language functions as instrumental, regulatory, interactional, heuristic, personal, imaginative and representational. The instrumental function, according to Halliday, serves to manipulate the environment, to cause certain events to happen, such as "don't touch the stove!"

etc. The regulatory function serves in controlling events through the use of approval, disapproval, etc. The representational function refers to the use of language to make statements, convey facts and knowledge, such as to explain, or to report, etc. The interactional function serves to ensure social maintenance. This is exhibited in knowledge of slang, jargon, jokes, politeness, and formality expectations. The personal function allows a speaker to express feelings and emotions. The heuristic function involves language used to acquire knowledge and to learn about the environment. Heuristic functions are often conveyed in the form of questions that will lead to answers. Children make good use of the heuristic functions in their use of why questions. The imaginative functions serve to creat imaginary systems of ideas, such as telling fairy tales, writing novels, creating poetry, etc.

Tough (1974) considers two basic functions of language: relational and ideational. The first one is used to "maintain the self" and the latter one is used to direct one's self to others' actions.

As a result of ethnographic/sociolinguistic observations of young children's communicative interactions, Wilkinson (1975) developed a list of language functions specifically related to them. Because of their importance in understanding the language use by school children, the functions are listed below.

Functions of Language

| | |
|---|---|
| Who am I? | 1 Establishing and maintaining self |
| | 2 Language for analyzing self |
| | 3 Language for expressing self (for celebrating or despairing, etc.) |
| Who are you? | 4 Establishing and maintaining relations |
| | 5 Co-operating |
| | 6 Empathizing, understanding the other |
| | 7 Role playing, mimicry |
| | 8 Guiding, directing the other |

Who/What is
he/she/it?

9 Giving information
10 Recalling events (past)
11 Describing present events
12 Predicting future events -
statements of intention
statements of hypothesis
what might happen
13 Analyzing, classifying
14 Explaining, giving reason for
15 Exploring, asking questions, but in other ways also, by "sounding out" people
16 Reflecting on own/others' thoughts and feelings

(Wilkinson, 1975, pp. 56-57)

In her study of teacher/children's language interactions, Fillmore (1979) suggests several functions of language related to children's production and comprehension. Samples of functions which she recognizes as important during classroom interactions are: to provide and elicit information, to explain, to describe, to clarify, etc.

In addition to research on language functions, psycholinguistic research by Cummins was felt to be important to the study of children's language use in school. Cummins (1980) suggests that there are two independent dimensions of language proficiency: cognitive-academic language skills, which are related to literacy skills, and sociolinguistic language skills, which are related to interpersonal communication skills.

Fillmore's (1976) research on the acquisition of English skills of five early elementary school children indicates that both aspects of language proficiency suggested by Cummins have unique but interrelated characteristics. Both are essential for successful achievement and social interaction in the classroom. Fillmore notes that sociolinguistic aspects of language are crucial to the acquisition and development of a second language in early elementary school children while cognitive-related functions often become

more critical for older second-language learners because of the emphasis on academic performance at higher grade levels. The implication of Fillmore's work is that both sociolinguistic and cognitive-academic language aspects are important to meaningful and appropriate communication of second language learners.

More recent research on language use in the classroom suggests that there are two dichotomous language dimensions. One is more related to the service of cognition -- academic-related language functions -- and the other is related to the service of interpersonal social interactions -- socio-affective related language functions (Genesee, in press). Successful communication with other participants seems to be correlated to the degree to which the individual has mastered both dimensions of language use.

The insights gained from the review of literature together with our experience as educators of language minority students provided the basis for developing a framework for training teachers in language proficiency assessment issues utilizing ethnographic/sociolinguistic methodologies.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ALPBP TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAM: PROCESS AND OUTCOMES

Phase I: Bilingual Language Proficiency Assessment: An Ethnographic Approach. Phase I of the ALPBP teacher training program was implemented in the spring of 1980 by Dr. Susan Philips through an agreement with the University of Arizona School of Education Bilingual Program and the College of Liberal Arts Anthropology Department to co-sponsor a three credit (45 hr.) graduate course. The course was developed to meet the needs of participating teachers.

It focused on three aspects of language proficiency as they relate to language minority students:

- Models of Language Proficiency;
- Language Proficiency in the Bilingual Classroom; and
- Language Proficiency in the Bilingual Community.

Through the course teachers were provided with background in approaches to the assessment of language proficiency of language minority students. They were introduced to basic sociolinguistic and ethnographic concepts related to language assessment, and were guided in the exploration of the nature of children's language proficiency in both classroom and community contexts. Sources of information included lectures, readings, and discussions. A more detailed description of this aspect of the training component is found in Philips' paper, "An Ethnographic Approach to Language Proficiency Assessment" (in press).

Phase II: Development of a Student Observation Instrument to Determine the Communicative Proficiency of Language Minority Students. The theoretical and methodological issues introduced by Philips formed the basis for development of Phase II, which took the form of a three-week intensive workshop. The goal of the workshop was to provide the participants with practical ethnographic/ sociolinguistic field techniques which would enable them to participate in the development of a teacher observation instrument. With the instructors' guidance -- Carmen Simich, a sociolinguist, and Robert Carrasco, an ethnographer -- participants developed the TOS.

The workshop included a review of the basic concepts of ethnographic monitoring in classroom settings. Videotapes of interactions between teacher/student(s) and student(s)/student(s) in elementary bilingual classrooms were used to aid in the development of teachers' observation skills. The process was one of guided discovery where, through discussion and brainstorming, teachers were made aware of the wide range of communicative skills students use with different participants in various classroom situations. The videotapes provided a means for detailed discussion of teacher/student(s) interactions vs. student(s)/student(s) interactions which focused on:

- o language use, language choice, code-switching and their relationship to communicative proficiency;
- o students' linguistic repertoires; and
- o sociolinguistic rules of interaction in the classroom.

The discussions resulting from viewing the videotapes were related to the teachers' practical experience as ethnographers and participant observers. After viewing the tapes, the participants and workshop leaders agreed that teachers were the most qualified to make valid emic predictions about their own students' communicative abilities. Outside observers, it was concurred, would not generally be aware of the specific rules of interaction implicitly or explicitly agreed upon by participants in classroom settings.

Early in the workshop, teachers were asked to list students' behaviors that, in their opinion, correlated with English proficiency. The purpose of the activity was to identify participants' understanding of communicative proficiency. Responses from this informal survey, summarized in Table 1, were analyzed, and grouped into four categories of behaviors. These are:

- o linguistic behaviors related to grammatical, morphological, and syntactic skills in oral speech, as well as literacy skills;
- o ethnographic/sociolinguistic behaviors related to language use considering setting, participants, nonverbal behaviors, goals of interaction, language(s) used by students;
- o student background factors related to language of the home, language(s) exposure, years of schooling, etc.; and
- o psychological factors related to self-concept and language(s) used in emotional interactions.

Sixty-five percent of the total number of behaviors identified were linguistic, seventeen percent fell within the ethnographic/sociolinguistic category, twelve percent were student background factors and six percent were psychological factors. The most frequently cited linguistic behaviors focused on ability to explain, amount of code-switching during discourse, contribution to discussion and initiating conversation. Word order, command of syntax, and vocabulary as well as the ability to complete writing assignments were cited as major indicators of "good" writing ability. Listening factors selected were "good" receptive ability and understanding verbal cues. Only one reading skill, the ability to read at grade level, was named.

Among the most often listed ethnographic/sociolinguistic behaviors were: the language(s) students use during play situations, the use of nonverbal behaviors, "language fluency," and ability to initiate conversation with different participants in distinct contextual settings. Background information factors cited were: language of the home, number of years of schooling, information in students' cumulative files, and ethnic background. Language use in the home was the one most often mentioned. The psychological factors designated were: students' shyness or self-consciousness, and language(s)

TABLE 1

Teacher Selected Factors Used to Evaluate

Students' Communicative Proficiency

| Linguistic Behaviors | Number of Times Selected | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **Speaking** | | |
| Code-switching (Using two languages during discourse) | 5 | |
| Use of dialect(s) | 1 | |
| "Good" Pronunciation | 1 | |
| Responding "well" to directions, questions, etc. | 1 | |
| Initiating conversation | 2 | |
| Contributing to discussion | 4 | |
| Ability to explain in a group situation (e.g., "good" productive ability, amount of talk, ability to negotiate) | 15 | |
| **Writing** | | |
| Word order, noun and verb agreement, placement of adjective before noun | 5 | |
| "Satisfactorily" completing writing assignments in English | 2 | |
| Completing tasks independently and accurately, "with 'good' control of syntax and vocabulary" | 4 | |
| Building on sentences | 2 | |
| **Listening** | | |
| "Good" receptive ability | 5 | |
| Understanding verbal cues | 2 | |
| **Reading** | | |
| Reading on grade level | 1 | |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF TIMES SELECTED | 50 | 65 |
| **Ethnographic/Sociolinguistic Behaviors** | | |
| Language(s) used with peers during unsupervised play situations | 4 | |
| Language(s) used with peers and teacher during supervised situations | 1 | |
| Ability to initiate conversation with teacher and peers in classroom in both small and large instructional groups | 2 | |
| Use of jingles during unsupervised activities in the playground | 1 | |
| Language fluency | 2 | |
| Nonverbal behaviors (e.g.,"responds by nodding, blank look, head down") | 3 | |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF TIMES SELECTED | 13 | 17 |
| **Students' Background Factors** | | |
| Language(s) spoken at home | 5 | |
| Language used most frequently by student at home | 1 | |
| Information in students' cumulative file | 1 | |
| Number of years of schooling | 1 | |
| Ethnic background | 1 | |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF TIMES SELECTED | 9 | 12 |
| **Psychological Factors** | | |
| Student is "shy or self conscious" | 4 | |
| Language(s) used in emotional interactions | 1 | |
| TOTAL NUMBER OF TIMES SELECTED | 5 | 6 |
| Total Number of Factors | 77 | |

used during emotional interactions. In short, results from the survey indicated that:

- o teachers' criteria for judging language proficiency is generally based on a consideration of linguistic factors with a particular emphasis on oral language skills;
- o few teachers include nonverbal language in their criteria of communicative performance; and
- o few teachers consider, in their criteria, students' appropriate use of language in terms of contextual and psychological factors affecting communication.

The communicative proficiency model adapted from Briere (1979, see Figure 1) was discussed with teachers, and related to results from the teacher survey. The purpose in utilizing this model was to make participants aware that language use requires speakers/listeners to possess more than the knowledge of the grammar of a language and that sociolinguistic aspects of language should be taken into account when assessing communicative proficiency. After relating the model to the results of the survey, participants arrived at the conclusion that there was a need to consider the communicative proficiency of their students in terms of both linguistic and sociolinguistic skills.

The review of basic ethnographic concepts, discussion of the results from the teachers' survey of communicative proficiency factors, and a modified sociolinguistic model of communicative proficiency (Briere, 1979) provided the foundation for the inductive process used to develop the TOS.

The major questions raised during its conceptualization and development were:

- o What kinds of functional language skills does the language minority student bring to school?
- o In which language(s), social contexts, and for what purposes does the student communicate best?

- In which language(s) does the student have the widest contextual range of communicative abilities?
- What kinds of communicative skills does the student need to master in order to participate appropriately as a member of the school speech community?

Important in the process of developing the TOS was the selection of contextual settings in which to observe students' communicative interactions, the language(s) of instruction, directness or indirectness of "teacher talk," and classroom organization (teacher-centered vs. student-centered). The language characteristics and linguistic background of the student were also considered consequential for the planning of the TOS. Ethnographic, socio-linguistic and educational variables considered significant were: background of parents, number of siblings at home, age, language use at home and in the community, ethnohistorical and ethnolinguistic information.

The recognition that students have varied repertoires of functional language use in different situations and with different participants, motivated the selection of some components of speech events suggested by Hymes (1972) as the the basis for developing the TOS. Table 2 describes those components used during the initial stage of development. They were: setting, participants, channel of communication, languages used and discourse characteristics.

TABLE 2

COMPONENTS OF INSTRUCTIONAL EVENTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER OBSERVATION SYSTEM

| Setting | Participants | Channels of Communication | Language(s) Used | Discourse Characteristics |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Instructional (formal) vs. Non-instructional (informal) events | Teacher/Student(s) Student/Student(s) | speaking listening reading writing | English Spanish | coherence complexity adequacy of vocabulary code-switching |

Ideally, an ethnographic approach to language proficiency assessment consists of observing a student in the community, home and school contexts. However, because of the impracticability of doing so in all three domains, it was decided to obtain community and home information through student interviews and other available school records, and to only observe students in the school setting.

The advantages and disadvantages of using the categories of setting, participant(s), sociolinguistic behaviors, etc., was a critical issue of discussion in the development of the TOS. After considering the range of speech events that usually occur in a school day, three representative situations and social contexts were chosen. In order to assist observers in the description of students' communicative behavior in the different interactional contexts, basic questions were developed. The questions provide a guide to the observer in describing a student's range of communicative skills. The questions and interactions are described in Table 3.

TABLE 3

TOS

OBSERVATION QUESTIONS IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS

| Social Contexts: | Adult Directed Instructional | Peer Group Instructional | Non-Instructional | Other |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Questions to be answered during observations | 1. What language(s) and/or nonverbal behavior are used by the student to communicate?<br>When the child does not communicate verbally, what evidence do you see that indicates understanding? Describe the behavior observed.<br>2. When the student does not seem to understand, what does she/he do to clarify the situation? Describe the communicative behavior observed.<br>3. Does the student follow the implicit and explicit rules of communication of the social context you are observing? | | | |

The field test version of the TOS (Appendix A) has three components:

Section I: Background Information
Section II: Teacher Observation Data Sheet
Section III: Description of Observation Data

Section I consists of a three part questionnaire: student information, optimal student information, and teacher information. The first part includes questions regarding basic information about a student's name, age, sex, birthdate and language usage. The second part contains questions about previous schooling experiences and language(s) used in the home. The third part includes questions about the teacher's language background. Section II includes four social contexts used to describe students' communicative behavior. Three basic questions guide the observer to focus on specific communicative behavior. Section III consists of two parts. In part one, the teacher summarizes the observed student's communicative behavior. In part two, extralinguistic factors that may affect students' communicative ability (e.g., physical, emotional, and/or social) are described.

A preliminary Usage Manual for use with the TOS was also developed. It consists of four sections:

- Introduction
- Rationale: description of the ethnographic/sociolinguistic theories and methodologies underlying the development of the TOS
- How to use the TOS
- Glossary of terms

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The TOS Usage Manual has not been revised since it was originally developed during the second ALPBP teacher training workshop.

The introduction summarizes the purpose of the TOS. The rationale provides the theoretical and methodological approaches which serve as a framework for an interpretation of students' communicative proficiency. The third section describes how to use the TOS. The glossary of terms defines terminology used in the TOS and in the TOS Usage Manual.

Phase III: Toward a Validation of the TOS. It was recognized that before the TOS could be validated and be of practical use to teachers, it was necessary to determine whether:

- the selected TOS interactional contexts sample valid presentations of students' classroom interactions;
- the three questions for each interactional context solicit from the observer an accurate description of the observed students' functional language abilities;
- behaviors described by teachers focus on a description of functional language use;
- it is possible to identify students' functional abilities through observation of selected classroom events; and
- it is possible to develop a representative number of communicative performance indicators based on identification of functional language abilities.

In order to clarify these issues and in preparation for field testing of the TOS, participants were further trained in the use of microethnographic/sociolinguistic field methods to identify how children use language for functional purposes. The workshop was organized by Charlene Rivera and Carmen Simich. It was expected that participants would gain a better understanding of what students need to know in order to accomplish communicative tasks

during classroom interactions, with the goal of relating this understanding to the observation tasks outlined in the TOS. The workshop was organized as follows:

- o a review of basic concepts of language proficiency and language proficiency assessment;
- o a review of the anthropological orientation of "doing ethnography" in classroom settings;
- o a review of the nature and intent of the TOS; and
- o a formal introduction to functional uses of language in the school, home, and community settings and their relationship to the teacher observation tasks outlined in the TOS.

The field testing of the TOS was incorporated into the two-day session. Teachers were paired and assigned to different schools to observe students from kindergarten to ninth grade in chosen instructional events. Each teacher recorded his/her observations individually. The half day observations were to be recorded in terms of functional language used by the observed students and other participants, e.g., teacher, peers, etc. Two teachers were assigned to observe the same student in order to compare observations and increase observer reliability. Following the observations, instructors and participants discussed the problems and rewards of the experience. Based on their insights into the process, small groups reviewed the experience, brainstormed, and discussed possible "indicators" of communicative proficiency. Participants also made recommendations for changes in TOS content and format.

Efforts in the Development and Validation of the TOS. In late May, 1981, a meeting was held between ALPBP project personnel and a representative from Tucson Unified School District. The purpose of the meeting was to develop criteria for analyzing the TOS field test data. The criteria agreed upon was:

- whether the observer answered the three questions for each of the four social contexts posed in the TOS (see Table 3);
- whether the observer provided a complete and accurate description of the social contexts observed;
- whether the observer described a student's behavior in terms of functional language use; and
- whether the observer's summary of the observation recommendations for student placement were representative of their description of the student's functional language abilities.

Because the TOS was at the field test stage, the ALPBP staff were concerned that TUSD would attempt to identify "indicators" of communicative proficiency based only on the field test. However, after reviewing the field test results, the concensus of the ALPBP staff and the TUSD representative was that, at most, the data could provide a sample list of communicative functions related to language proficiency identified at the time of the field test. Most importantly, it was concurred that the data could not compensate for an ethnographic/sociolinguistic study of natural language use in elementary classrooms to investigate what "ways of speaking" (Hymes, 1972, 1974) or functional uses of language that are available to participants in school settings. Based on identification of reliable and valid indicators, it would then be possible to determine what sociolinguistic skills students need in order to be considered proficient communicators. Once reliable and valid indicators are identified, it would then be possible to formally validate the TOS or any other similar instrument.

## Conclusion

In this concluding section, the limitations and significance of the ALPBP teacher training program in Tucson are described. The purpose is to provide evaluative information regarding the ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach to language proficiency assessment.

Limitations of an Ethnographic/Sociolinguistic Approach to Language Proficiency Assessment. The limitations of the approach were found to be related to its implementation in actual classroom situations rather than to its conceptual framework (Philips, in press). The most significant determinants of successful implementation in Tucson were found to be:

- the working relationship between teachers and administrators;
- the time required to become familiar with the ethnographic/sociolinguistic orientation to language proficiency assessment;
- the educational background of teachers; and
- the characteristics of the ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach.

The Working Relationship Among TUSD Educators. Cooperation of educators to participate in any training program is highly related to the working relationship between teachers and administrators. In the case of TUSD, some tension was evidenced between teachers and administrators because of inadequate communication between the two. On the one hand, teachers sometimes felt impotent and frustrated because they were not always sufficiently informed about the administrative details which affected them. On the other hand, it was evident that internal school district changes and pressures were reflected in the administrators' relationship with the teachers, and for this reason, administrative details were not always communicated to teachers.

Despite this tension, the gradual involvement and acceptance of the ideas presented during the ALPBP training sessions became a motivating force for both teachers and administrators to cooperate fully.

The Time Factor. Time to assimilate basic theoretical concepts and to become experienced in their application was found to be a problematic aspect in the training of the Tucson teachers. The time alloted for training was negotiated by ALPBP staff with the TUSD liaisons and was limited primarily by district constraints.

Although each of the three phases of the training program was carefully planned, difficulties arose in coordinating sufficient leave time for teachers to attend extended training sessions. Short intermittent sessions were not generally possible because the major consultants were not in the Tucson area. The participating teachers found that the short intense training sessions did not always allow sufficient time to absorb and understand the new theoretical concepts being introduced. One teacher summarized the feeling by indicating that the "time (was) too rushed." She felt "overwhelmed with information." Other teachers suggested that more time should have been given for additional practice and demonstration of observational techniques. Ideally, participants concurred, training sessions should be distributed throughout the school year to allow for clarification of theoretical concepts and their application in the classroom.

Teacher Educational Background. Teachers do not generally have a background in child language development or second language acquisition issues. They are not familiar with communicative patterns of interaction of multicultural/multilingual student populations; nor are they familiar with the rationale

for assessing language proficiency. In Tucson, it was found that teachers highly correlate English language proficiency with knowledge of discrete grammatical/phonological items. The participant survey (Table 1) confirmed that bilingual educators were not consciously aware of how sociocultural variables influence the manner in which morphological, phonological and lexical items are integrated into cohesive discourse. Teachers' concerns regarding the assessment of students' language proficiency were, in general, focused on ease of test administration and interpretation of test results, rather than with the nature and scope of children's language and its valid measurement. A general recommendation from the instructors who worked with the teachers was that courses in linguistics, including child language development, second language acquisition, and language proficiency assessment, be integrated into undergraduate programs so that the new generation of teachers is prepared to deal with the complexities of assessing the language proficiency of language minority students.

Characteristics of the Ethnographic/Sociolinguistic Approach. The approach requires systematic observation, by a participant observer, of students' language use in naturally occurring communicative situations in different domains: community, home and school. The role of participant observer has two dimensions: that of a detached, objective observer, and that of an active participant. As such, it requires a person to observe and, at the same time, participate in communicative interactions from a detached yet focused perspective.

In attempting to utilize this approach in the TOS it was found that this dual role can, and generally is, problematic because it requires that the teacher concentrate attention on the communicative behaviors of one student while simultaneously maintaining the teacher role providing meaningful learning

activities for all students in the classroom. However, because of the nature of the TOS, which favors observations by participants who already have an "insider's" knowledge of social rules of language use in each individual classroom, it was decided to use this approach.

Significance of the Ethnographic/Sociolinguistic Approach to Training Teachers in Language Proficiency Assessment Issues. Despite the limitations described above, there were several significant outcomes from the ALPBP teacher training approach to language proficiency assessment. The major outcomes were:

- o teachers' awareness of the holistic nature of language;
- o changes in teachers' philosophy of education, as reflected in their self-assessment of classroom organization and management practices; and
- o the development of an ethnographic/sociolinguistic language proficiency instrument, the TOS.

Teachers' Awareness of the Holistic Nature of Language. The holistic orientation to the nature of language and language proficiency assessment is an important aspect of the ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach to language proficiency assessment. Within this non-traditional approach, language proficiency is defined as knowledge of the grammar of a language together with knowledge of the rules of language use. In addition to linguistic variables, sociocultural and sociolinguistic variables, such as setting, participant(s), topic(s) of interaction, language(s) used at home, school and community are acknowledged. This approach is in contrast to the more traditional one where the major criterion for evaluating language proficiency is knowledge of specific grammatical and phonological items without consideration of the rules of interaction and other sociocultural and sociolinguistic variables that affect communication.

The observations of children's communicative interactions and class discussions provided the opportunity for teachers to become more conscious of the influence of sociolinguistic factors in children's language use. Awareness of the holistic nature of language motivated participants to reanalyze their understanding of language use and its role in classroom communication and learning. One teacher summarized, "I gained additional insight into communication as a whole package." Another teacher said, "I now understand communication is not only verbal." One teacher indicated, "(I am now) more observant of the manner in which children communicate...I have learned to focus on the function of communicative behaviors...to not only listen to what is or is not said but to pay more attention to how the message is communicated."

Changes in Philosophy of Education. The understanding and acceptance of the ethnographic/sociolinguistic approach and subsequent changes in philosophy of education were evidenced by comments and discussions between participating teachers and instructors. Through the training, teachers became more conscious of the need to expose children to different situations in order to promote motivation and learning through a variety of communicative interactions with different participants in various social contexts. This understanding influenced some teachers to modify their views regarding classroom organization and management. One teacher indicated, "(I now) organize physically in order to allow for more freedom of interaction." Another teacher stated, "I feel an increased sensitivity to the perceptions children have of their environment, especially of their school environment. I feel more acutely aware of the various levels of activity occurring in the classroom and school."

The Development of the TOS. The development of a non-traditional instrument, the TOS, was another significant outcome of the ALPBP training. The TOS is the first instrument which attempts to relate focused teacher observations of students' functional language use in classroom settings and communicative proficiency. The development of the TOS is important because it has the potential of providing teachers with an instrument which acknowledges the wide range of communicative abilities of language minority students. Although the TOS itself is not yet validated and possibly never will be, it represents an important innovation in language proficiency assessment practice which has far reaching implications for educators servicing language minority students.

## NOTES

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